

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 203

By Bone

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Ernie Ashworth of Hartsville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Ernie Ashworth; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ashworth was an exemplary individual and a famed musician who was a member of the WSM Grand Ole Opry and a celebrated star on the country music scene; and

WHEREAS, Ernie Ashworth was working for NASA at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, when his country music career first began; and

WHEREAS, he had been writing songs for Wesley Rose some time before Mr. Rose convinced him to sign a contract as a songwriter for Acuff-Rose Publishing in 1950; and

WHEREAS, in this position, Mr. Ashworth won cuts by Carl Smith, Roy Acuff, Jimmy Dickens, Johnny Horton, Wilma Lee Cooper, and pop artist Paul Anka; and

WHEREAS, in the late 1950s, Ernie Ashworth began a recording career under the pseudonym Billy Worth on the MGM label; he soon moved to Decca Records and began recording under his own name; and

WHEREAS, in 1955, Mr. Ashworth achieved success with the Top Five hit, "Each Moment Spent with You," the Top Ten single, "You Can't Pick a Rose in December," and the Top Twenty hit, "Forever Gone"; and

WHEREAS, in 1962, he signed on with Acuff-Rose's label, Hickory Records, and had two of his singles, "Everybody But Me" and "I Take the Chance," make it into the Top Ten shortly after their release; and

WHEREAS, on his first listen of the song "Talk Back Trembling Lips," written by John D. Loudermilk, Ernie Ashworth almost turned down what would become his career hit; he was skeptical because it was different than anything he had previously recorded; and

WHEREAS, Wesley Rose encouraged Mr. Ashworth to record the song, telling him he believed it would be the song that would get him on the Grand Ole Opry; Mr. Ashworth, however, remained skeptical, saying that “Talk Back Trembling Lips” was the worst song he had heard in his life; and

WHEREAS, despite his hesitations, however, Ernie Ashworth agreed to record the song; when he later played it for his friends in Huntsville, they loved it, though Mr. Ashworth still disagreed; and

WHEREAS, “Talk Back Trembling Lips” became a famed smash hit, earning Mr. Ashworth numerous honors from *Cashbox*, *Billboard*, and *Record World*; and

WHEREAS, on March 7, 1964, Ernie Ashworth became a member of the WSM Grand Ole Opry, and he was finally able to quit his job at Redstone Arsenal; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ashworth garnered extreme success as a musician; every record he released between 1960 and 1970 charted nationally, and twelve made it into the Top Ten; and

WHEREAS, as his recording career flourished, Ernie Ashworth branched out into the business world with the purchase of several radio stations; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ashworth earned many accolades for his outstanding success in the country music industry; in 1992, he was inducted into the Alabama Country Music Hall of Fame, and in March of 2008, he was inducted into the Alabama Musicians’ Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, Ernie Ashworth returned to the studio and recorded his thirty-fifth Grand Ole Opry anniversary CD; and

WHEREAS, in November of 2007, his wife of fifty-five years, Bettye Ashworth, passed away after an extended battle with cancer; and

WHEREAS, even after the loss of his wife, Ernie Ashworth remained active in the Hartsville community, frequenting the Senior Center on Marlene Street, where he regularly played rook with other seniors; he also sang karaoke at Choo Choo’s Hot Dog Shack and Ice Cream Parlor on Thursday nights; and

WHEREAS, a familiar and valued face in his community, Mr. Ashworth did his own grocery shopping, walked in the park, and ate at local restaurants; and

WHEREAS, he was also deeply devoted to local causes and always contributed to them however he could; he performed “Talk Back Trembling Lips” in a 2007 performance of the

Hartsville Follies, sponsored by the Hartsville Rotary Club; just three months before his death, he rode with the staff of WTNK Radio on their Christmas parade float in the Hartsville Christmas Parade, waving and throwing candy to the crowd; and

WHEREAS, Ernie Ashworth leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional musician and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Ernie Ashworth, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to his community and to the development of country music in Nashville.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Ernie Ashworth.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.